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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Concluding observations on the third periodic report of the Republic of Moldova*

1. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights considered the third periodic report of the Republic of Moldova on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/MDA/3) at its 56th and 57th meetings (E/C.12/2016/SR.56 and 57) held on 21 and 22 September 2017, and adopted the following concluding observations at its 70th meeting, held on 6 October 2017.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the third periodic report submitted by the State party and the supplementary information provided in the replies to the list of issues (E/C.12/MDA/Q/3/Add.1). The Committee also appreciates the constructive dialogue held with the State party's high-level interministerial delegation.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the adoption by the State party of:

(a) The People's Advocate (Ombudsman) Act (No. 52) in 2014 and the People's Advocate (Ombudsman) established in 2014 thereunder;

(b) Law No. 121 on ensuring equality in 2012 and the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality established in 2013 thereunder;

(c) The national development strategy, "Moldova 2020", for the period 2012-2020 in 2012.

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

Application of the Covenant

4. The Committee regrets the lack of information provided by the State party on the cases in which the Covenant has been invoked before or applied by domestic courts. It is concerned that the State party has not made a sufficient effort to raise awareness of the Covenant and the justiciability of the rights enshrined therein among judges, lawyers and other public officials.

5. **The Committee recommends that the State party enhance training for judges, lawyers and public officials on the provisions of the Covenant and their justiciability.**

* Adopted by the Committee at its sixty-second session (18 September-6 October 2017).

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It reiterates its previous recommendation that the State party provide, in its next periodic report, information on the relevant case law. In that respect, the Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general comment No. 9 (1998) on the domestic application of the Covenant.

Data collection

6. The Committee regrets the insufficient provision of reliable and relevant statistical data relating to the progressive realization of the Covenant rights. It is concerned that there is no comprehensive data-collection system relating to economic, social and cultural rights in the State party and the available data are largely not disaggregated.

7. **The Committee recommends that the State party improve its data-collection system with a view to collecting comprehensive and comparative data, which would make it possible to assess the level of enjoyment of Covenant rights, particularly by disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups. It also recommends that the State party provide, in its next periodic report, the comparative annual statistical data necessary to assess the progressive realization of Covenant rights and ensure that such data are disaggregated by sex, age, geographical location, disability, religion and other status.**

National human rights institutions

8. The Committee notes the two national human rights institutions established in the State party, namely the People's Advocate (the Ombudsman) and the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality (the Equality Council). The Committee is concerned that the level of financial and human resources provided to these institutions is not sufficient for them to carry out their respective mandates and that the implementation by public authorities of the recommendations or decisions made by them is low.

9. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to:**

(a) **Provide both the Ombudsman and the Equality Council with sufficient financial and human resources and ensure that the way these institutions are financed does not undermine their independence;**

(b) **Ensure adequate follow-up to the recommendations and decisions made by these institutions;**

(c) **Ensure that they are fully in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles).**

National action plan on human rights

10. While noting the adoption of a new national action plan on human rights for the period 2017-2021, the Committee expresses its concern that the previous national action plan for the period 2011-2014 was not fully implemented, monitored and assessed, mainly owing to the lack of funding allocated for its implementation and the decentralization process.

11. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures to ensure that the national action plan on human rights for the period 2017-2021 is fully implemented, including by allocating sufficient funding for its implementation and regularly monitoring the implementation. It also recommends that the State party engage the two national human rights institutions, civil society and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation process, taking into consideration the present concluding observations.**

Rural-urban inequality and decentralization

12. The Committee is concerned at the large rural-urban inequalities in the enjoyment of the Covenant rights, particularly in the areas of employment, housing, health-care services,

education and other services. It is particularly concerned that the recent decentralization of Government appears to have further exacerbated the situation, owing to the varying levels of capacity and political will of local governments. The Committee is further concerned at the disproportionately adverse impacts on disadvantaged and marginalized persons, such as Roma and persons with disabilities.

13. **The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to address rural-urban inequalities with a view to ensuring that all people in both rural and urban areas fully enjoy the rights enshrined in the Covenant. It also recommends that the State party strengthen the financial, administrative and infrastructural capacity of local government at the provincial and municipal levels; improve the coordination between the central and local governments and the monitoring of social services provided by local governments; ensure that the decentralization process does not adversely affect disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups; and conduct a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the decentralization process on the enjoyment of Covenant rights. Furthermore, reminding the State party that the decentralization by no means reduces the responsibility for fulfilling its obligations under the Covenant, the Committee recommends that the State party increase the awareness of local authorities regarding their obligations under the Covenant.**

Maximum available resources

14. The Committee is concerned that public expenditure on social security, housing and basic services, health care and education has decreased as a ratio of gross domestic product (GDP) during the reporting period and the level remains low (art. 2 (1)).

15. **The Committee recommends that the State party substantially increase the level of public social expenditure, at both the national and local levels, to ensure the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights, especially with regard to social security, housing, water and sanitation, health care and education.**

Corruption

16. While noting the measures taken by the State party to combat corruption, the Committee remains concerned about the prevalence of corruption in the public sector, particularly in the judiciary, and the widespread practice of bribery to obtain public services, particularly in the health-care and education sectors. It is also concerned that despite the increase in the number of cases reported and in the number of convictions, in most cases, prosecutions for corruption are limited to low-level public officials (art. 2 (1)).

17. **The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to combat corruption and in particular:**

(a) **Raise awareness among the general public and government officials on the need to combat corruption, including bribery;**

(b) **Strengthen the enforcement of anti-corruption laws and combat impunity for corruption, particularly involving high-level officials;**

(c) **Strengthen the capacity of the judiciary to respond to corruption and ensure the effective protection of victims of corruption, their lawyers, anti-corruption activists, whistle-blowers and witnesses;**

(d) **Improve public governance and ensure transparency in the conduct of public affairs.**

Non-discrimination

18. The Committee is concerned that anti-discrimination provisions, including law No. 121 on ensuring equality, do not provide for the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds referred to in article 2 (2) of the Covenant and in all aspects of life, or address multiple and intersectional discrimination (art. 2 (2)).

19. **The Committee recommends that the State party review its anti-discrimination legislation, particularly the law on ensuring equality, with a view to providing for the**

prohibition of all direct, indirect and multiple forms of discrimination on all grounds, including health status, wealth, social origin, sexual orientation and gender identity. Such a law should provide for effective remedies for victims of discrimination, including within judicial and administrative proceedings. It draws the attention of the State party to its general comment No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights.

Disability certificate system

20. The Committee is concerned that despite the reform efforts of the State party, the disability certificate system remains largely based on a medical approach. It notes that the proportion of persons recognized with disabilities is very low (5.1 per cent), which appears to indicate the inadequacy of the disability certificate system. It is also concerned that only a very small proportion of persons with severe disabilities are provided with personal assistants, owing to lack of funding (art. 2 (2)).

21. **The Committee recommends that the State party review the disability certificate system to ensure that the assessment reflects the characteristics, circumstances and needs of persons with disabilities and allocate sufficient funding to provide personal assistants for all persons with severe disabilities.**

Roma

22. While noting the adoption of the action plan for supporting the Roma population for the period 2016-2020, the Committee regrets the limited implementation of the previous plan for the period 2011-2015, owing to the lack of sufficient steps taken and of funding, and remains concerned that Roma continue to face discrimination in every aspect of life. Despite the progress made through Roma community mediators in the areas of social security, health and education, the Committee is concerned that the majority of mediator positions are not filled owing to the lack of funding and political will of local governments, which are mandated to deal with Roma issues through decentralization (arts. 2 (2), 9, 12 and 13).

23. **The Committee recommends that the State party fully implement the action plan for supporting the Roma population for the period 2016-2020 by, among other measures, allocating sufficient funding for its implementation, and ensure that all 48 Roma community mediator positions are filled.**

Equality between men and women

24. The Committee is concerned that the overall representation of women in decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors remains very low. While welcoming the minimum 40 per cent representation of both sexes in the lists of candidates for parliamentary and local elections, it is concerned that the formula to implement that quota is not yet clear. It is also concerned at the persistent gender role stereotypes and the care responsibility assigned predominantly to women in the State party, which prevent them from pursuing their professional careers (art. 3).

25. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to fully implement the minimum 40 per cent quota, including by adopting the "zipper system", and improve the representation of women, including Roma women and women with disabilities, in decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors. It further urges the State party to intensify its efforts to eliminate gender role stereotypes and to promote equal sharing of family and care responsibilities between women and men, including by increasing public care services for children, older persons and persons with disabilities, and encouraging men to take parental leave.**

Right to work

26. The Committee regrets the lack of disaggregated statistical data relating to the right to work for the reporting period. The Committee is concerned that the employment rate is very low in general and among Roma, especially Roma women, and persons with

disabilities, despite the adoption of the five per cent quota for the employment of persons with disabilities (arts. 2 (2) and 6).

27. **The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to improve the overall employment situation and, in particular, (a) effectively implement the five per cent employment quota for persons with disabilities and ensure that they are provided with reasonable accommodation in the workplace; (b) increase the employment of Roma people, including women, through improving vocational training and employment services; and (c) encourage employers to hire persons with disabilities and Roma, including through incentive programmes.**

Moldovan migrant workers abroad

28. The Committee notes that the total number of Moldovan migrant workers abroad amounts to 30 per cent of the workforce of the State party, with a majority of them from rural areas, and that remittances from them comprise a quarter of GDP. The Committee, however, is concerned at the negative consequences of so many persons leaving the State party, in particular:

(a) The deplorable situation of about 100,000 children left behind by their migrant parents, illustrated by high school dropout rates, deteriorating nutrition and health conditions, and psychoemotional problems;

(b) The acute shortage of skilled workers and well-trained qualified professionals, particularly in the health and education sectors;

(c) The differentiated social protection measures in the bilateral agreements between the State party and the countries of employment, which may lead to the exclusion of some migrants from the social security system upon their return;

(d) The difficulties faced by returnees in reintegrating into the labour market (arts. 6, 7, 9 and 10).

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to:**

(a) **Ensure that the children of Moldovan migrant workers abroad are fully taken care of by family members or designated carers and are not deprived of their economic, social and cultural rights, including to health care and education and, in that regard, provide support for alternative carers;**

(b) **Retain its workforce, particularly skilled workers and qualified medical and education professionals, including through appropriate incentives;**

(c) **Extend bilateral agreements to provide for the full labour and social protection of migrant workers in the country of employment and ensure that they can fully benefit from the social security system when they return;**

(d) **Facilitate the integration of returned migrant workers into the labour market by increasing professional training and creating job opportunities.**

Minimum wage

30. The Committee is concerned that the levels of minimum wages are far below the minimum subsistence level and that the minimum wage in the public sector has not been indexed since 2014 and is half of that in the private sector (art. 7).

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party (a) increase the minimum wage, particularly in the public sector, to a level that provides workers and their families with a decent living; (b) regularly adjust the minimum wage to the cost of living; (c) reinforce employers' compliance with the minimum wage through labour inspections and complaint mechanisms; and (d) ensure that those who fail to pay the minimum wage are sanctioned.**

Right to just and favourable conditions of work

32. The Committee is concerned at the widespread practice of undeclared wages (so-called "envelope wages"), which is a major obstacle in establishing a comprehensive social security system in the country and has a significant negative impact on the right to social security of those whose salaries are not fully declared. It is also concerned at the huge salary arrears, which amount to nearly 140 million MDL and affect over 17,000 employees (art. 7).

33. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to ensure that all wages of employees are fully declared and that all delayed and unpaid salaries are paid without further delay.**

Gender pay gap and equal pay for work of equal value

34. While welcoming the reduction of the gender pay gap by 50 per cent during the reporting period, the Committee is concerned at its persistence, which leads to a wider gender gap in social insurance benefits, such as pensions. It is also concerned at the absence of a legislative framework on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value (art. 7).

35. **The Committee recommends that the State party adopt a legislative framework on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and further reduce the gender pay gap, including by combating gender role stereotypes and improving the vocational and professional skills of women and their employment opportunities in non-traditional occupations.**

Occupational safety and health

36. The Committee notes with concern the high incidence of occupational accidents, which lead to death and severe injuries, and the ineffective labour inspections. It is particularly concerned at the provisions of law No. 131 on State control over entrepreneurship activities, which limits labour inspections to no more than one per year and provides for employers to be notified five days prior to inspections, and the insufficient financial and human resources allocated to the labour inspectorates (art. 7).

37. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to prevent occupational accidents, improve occupational safety and health and strengthen labour inspections, including by revising law No. 131 on State control over entrepreneurship activities and allocating sufficient human and financial resources to the labour inspectorates. The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general comment No. 23 (2016) on the right to just and favourable conditions of work.**

Free economic zones

38. The Committee is concerned that the incentive regime for the free economic zones, in particular the application of a 10-year freeze on complying with legislation for investors in free economic zones, may have a seriously adverse impact on the enjoyment of the Covenant rights by workers in those zones.

39. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures to ensure that the Covenant rights of workers in free economic zones are fully guaranteed and protected, including the rights to just and favourable conditions of work, to form and join trade unions and to strike, to health and to social security.**

Right to social security

40. The Committee reiterates its previous concern that the average contributory pension in the State party is well below the minimum subsistence level and that non-contributory social assistance benefits are even lower (see E/C.12/MDA/CO/2, para. 12). It is also concerned that:

(a) The time devoted by parents of children with severe disabilities to caregiving was not recognized for the period between 1999 and 2017 as regards social security entitlements;

(b) There is a lack of guarantee for the continuity of social protection benefits, which has led many people to fall outside the social protection system;

(c) Lawyers, notaries, interpreters and other independent professionals have limited access to social security programmes, which particularly affects women negatively;

(d) There is a lack of information about social security programmes and their complex application procedures, which prevents disadvantaged and marginalized individuals, particularly Roma and persons in rural areas, from benefiting from those programmes (arts. 2 (2) and 9).

41. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation that pension levels be increased to a level that ensures a decent living and, as a first step, reach the minimum subsistence level. It also recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Immediately rectify the situation of parents taking care of children with disabilities;**

(b) **Review the conditions of social security programmes, strengthen coordination between different social security programmes and rationalize the process of granting social security benefits, with a view to ensuring continuity of social protection;**

(c) **Ensure that freelance professionals, most of whom are women, have equal access to social security programmes;**

(d) **Raise public awareness of social security programmes and their application procedures and provide Roma and persons in rural areas with assistance to apply for social benefits and the necessary identity documents.**

Child labour

42. The Committee is concerned at the prevalence of child labour in the State party, particularly in the agricultural, sales and service sectors (arts. 7 and 10).

43. **The Committee recommends that the State party step up its efforts to combat child labour, including by strengthening labour inspections and enforcing the relevant legal and administrative measures, including order no. 393 of the Ministry of Education of 29 September 2014.**

Violence against women, including domestic violence

44. While noting the progress made by the State party, the Committee remains concerned that violence against women, including domestic violence, is still pervasive in the State party and that the prosecution of perpetrators and the protection of victims remain challenging (arts. 3 and 10).

45. **The Committee urges the State party to redouble its efforts:**

(a) **To ensure that all reported cases of violence against women, including domestic violence, are promptly and thoroughly investigated and that the perpetrators are punished with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offences;**

(b) **To provide adequate support to victims by increasing the number of shelters and allocating sufficient funding for legal aid and physical and psychological treatment;**

(c) **To provide training for law enforcement officials, teachers, medical personnel and social workers on violence against women, including domestic violence;**

(d) **To conduct wide public awareness-raising campaigns for the prevention of violence against women.**

Trafficking in human beings

46. While noting a number of measures taken by the State party to combat trafficking in persons, the Committee is concerned that the prosecution rate of offenders remains very low and the punishments imposed on them are reportedly lenient. It is also concerned at the insufficient provision of recovery and reintegration services for victims (art. 10).

47. **The Committee recommends that the State party step up its efforts to investigate acts of trafficking effectively and to prosecute and punish perpetrators with penalties commensurate with the gravity of their offences; provide shelters for victims of trafficking; and ensure their access to assistance, recovery and reintegration programmes.**

Right to an adequate standard of living

48. While appreciating the significant decrease in poverty rates, the Committee remains concerned that poverty is still pervasive, particularly in rural areas and among pensioners. It is also concerned that the Ajutor social cash transfer programme, the main poverty reduction programme of the State party, covers only 50 per cent of eligible persons, that the amounts of the benefits are far below the minimum subsistence level and that the eligibility criteria are overly restrictive (arts. 9 and 11).

49. **The Committee recommends that the State party step up its efforts to combat poverty with a special focus on persons in rural areas and pensioners. It also urges the State party to ensure that the Ajutor social cash transfer programme covers all eligible persons and increase the amount of benefits to a level that provides the beneficiaries with a decent standard of living. It further recommends that the State party review the eligibility criteria, including the list of assets, in order to ensure that the Ajutor social cash transfer programme covers all persons in need.**

Right to food

50. The Committee is concerned at the prevalence of malnutrition, including stunting and micronutrient deficiencies, and excessive weight and obesity, particularly among children, women and persons in rural areas (arts. 11 and 12).

51. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to address malnutrition among children, women and persons in rural areas, including by fully implementing the national food and nutrition programme adopted in 2016. It draws the attention of the State party to its general comment No. 12 (1999) on the right to adequate food and the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, adopted by the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.**

Water and sanitation

52. While noting the adoption of the water supply and sanitation strategy for the period 2014-2029, the Committee remains concerned that the overall level of access to improved water sources and adequate sanitation facilities is low, with a large disparity between rural and urban areas (arts. 11).

53. **The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to improve access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities, with a special focus on the rural areas, including by fully implementing the strategy. The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general comment No. 15 (2002) on the right to water and its statement on the right to sanitation (E/C.12/2010/1).**

Housing

54. Despite the measures taken by the State party, the Committee is concerned at the insufficient provision of social housing to disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups. The Committee regrets the lack of detailed information on the implementation of social housing policies, including the funding allocation by national and local governments

and disaggregated data on the number of applicants for social housing and of those granted social housing (art. 11).

55. **The Committee recommends that the State party step up its efforts to increase the provision of social housing with adequate public utilities to young people, persons with disabilities, Roma families and large families, and improve and maintain the quality of existing public housing. It also recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to involve all relevant stakeholders, including those in need of social housing, in the development of housing policies and monitor the implementation of housing policies, with a view to ensuring the transparency and effectiveness of those policies.**

Right to health

56. The Committee is concerned at the challenges facing the health-care system in the State party, in particular:

(a) The compulsory health insurance system leaves around 20 per cent of the population uncovered;

(b) The optimization process in the health-care sector further restricts access to health-care services, particularly in rural areas;

(c) The overall quality of health-care services is poor and no mechanisms are in place to monitor and control public health facilities;

(d) Roma, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV/AIDS, refugees and asylum seekers and other disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups are discriminated against in accessing health-care services (arts. 2 (2), 9 and 12).

57. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to:**

(a) **Ensure that the compulsory health insurance system covers every person in the State party;**

(b) **Ensure that the optimization process does not restrict the accessibility and affordability of health-care services, particularly among persons with disabilities, older persons and persons living in rural areas;**

(c) **Improve the quality of health-care services by securing a sufficient number of qualified medical professionals, modernizing medical equipment and facilities, and putting in place regulatory mechanisms for public health facilities;**

(d) **Address the discrimination faced by disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, particularly Roma, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV/AIDS, refugees and asylum seekers in accessing health-care services, and sensitize medical professionals to their special needs.**

58. The Committee notes that the State party has prepared a draft health code to overcome the challenges facing the current health-care system and improve it. The Committee, however, is concerned at repeated reports that the draft code does not sufficiently address the main challenges of the current system (art. 12).

59. **The Committee recommends that the State party review the draft health code with a view to fully addressing all the challenges facing the current health-care sector, particularly including those mentioned in paragraph 56 above, and ensuring that the draft is based on a human rights approach and is fully in line with article 12 of the Covenant.**

60. The Committee is concerned at the poor health conditions, including the high incidence of smoking and lung disease, that are prevalent among Roma women. It is also concerned that Roma have limited access to health-care services owing to the lack of information on health-care services and identity documents (arts. 2 (2) and 12).

61. **The Committee recommends that the State party take effective measures to tackle the excessive consumption of tobacco and the high incidence of lung disease among Roma women and carry out a study on their overall health conditions. It also**

recommends that the State party carry out information campaigns on the free primary health-care services and other health-care services available and provide identity documents to those Roma who do not have them.

Sexual and reproductive health

62. The Committee is concerned at:

(a) The limited access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including modern contraceptives, particularly for young persons, Roma women and women with disabilities;

(b) The lack of compulsory sexuality education in school, despite legal obligations, which leads to a high incidence of teenage pregnancy and early marriage due to pregnancy, as well as HIV and sexually transmitted infections among adolescents;

(c) The lack of coverage of abortion services under health insurance benefits, which leads to a large number of clandestine abortions;

(d) The continuing practice of coercive sterilization for women with disabilities, Roma women and women in rural areas allegedly without their free, informed and prior consent, and the legal provisions that allow non-consensual termination of a pregnancy on grounds of psychosocial or intellectual impairment (arts. 2 (2) and 12).

63. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all effective measures to:**

(a) **Ensure access for all to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including modern contraceptives;**

(b) **Carry out comprehensive and age-appropriate sexual and reproductive education in all educational institutions, as provided in the law on sexual and reproductive health;**

(c) **Ensure that health insurance covers abortion;**

(d) **End the practice of coercive sterilization for women with disabilities, Roma women and women in rural areas and repeal legislation that allows for the non-consensual termination of pregnancy.**

The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general comment No. 22 (2016) on the right to sexual and reproductive health.

HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis

64. The Committee is concerned at the growing incidence of HIV/AIDS and the frequent cases of disclosure of medical information of persons living with HIV/AIDS. It is also concerned at the troubling level of tuberculosis incidence, particularly multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis (art. 12).

65. **The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to combat the spread and effects of HIV/AIDS, including by extending the coverage of free antiretroviral treatment and revising the provisions of the Criminal Code that criminalize HIV transmission. It urges the State party to review law no. 23-XVI of 2007 on the prevention of HIV/AIDS infection, with a view to protecting patient confidentiality. It also recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to treat and prevent tuberculosis, particularly multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis.**

Drug users

66. The Committee is concerned at reports that drug users have been subjected to compulsory treatment, combined with detention, and that the harm reduction programmes for drug users face the withdrawal of international funding, which will result in fewer health services and an increased prevalence of hepatitis and HIV among drug users (art. 12).

67. **The Committee recommends that the State party apply a human rights-based approach to the treatment of drug users and provide appropriate health care,**

psychological support and rehabilitation. It urges the State party to maintain harm reduction programmes for drug users.

Environment

68. The Committee is concerned at the serious soil and groundwater pollution caused by landfill methods of waste disposal and the extensive use of agricultural chemicals and persistent organic pollutants, including pesticides and insecticides (arts. 11 and 12).

69. **The Committee recommends that the State party use environmentally-friendly methods to manage, monitor, collect and treat waste, as an alternative to landfill methods; put in place appropriate waste-recycling programmes; and promote sustainable consumption and production patterns. It urges the State party to ensure that the use of harmful chemicals in agriculture is fully monitored and regulated.**

Right to education

70. The Committee is concerned at:

(a) The low level of school enrolment among young people in rural areas and Roma children and the high dropout rates, including among children of Moldovan migrant workers abroad, at all levels of education;

(b) The poor quality of education owing to poor educational materials and facilities and the insufficient recruitment of young teachers;

(c) The insufficient provision of inclusive education for students with disabilities;

(d) The limited opportunities for education in regional languages (arts. 13, 14 and 15).

71. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to:**

(a) **Counter low enrolment rates among Roma children and young people in the rural areas and the high dropout rates, including among children of Moldovan migrant workers abroad, at all levels of education;**

(b) **Improve educational materials and school facilities, including water and sanitation facilities, and increase the number of young teachers, including by improving salaries and benefits;**

(c) **Increase access to inclusive education for students with disabilities;**

(d) **Increase the opportunities for students of regional languages to be taught in their mother tongue.**

The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general comment No. 13 (1999) on the right to education.

School optimization process

72. The Committee notes that under the school optimization process, 78 schools in rural areas have so far been closed, another 20 schools are to be closed by the end of 2017 and the affected students are provided with free transport to go to school. The Committee, however, is concerned at repeated reports that students often miss school and cannot participate in most extracurricular activities owing to inadequate transport services and that the vehicles provided are largely not accessible by students with physical disabilities (arts. 2 (2), 13 and 14).

73. **The Committee urges the State party to take immediate and effective measures to ensure that students affected by the school optimization process are provided with all necessary support, including sufficient transport services, to participate in all school activities and that the vehicles provided are accessible by students with disabilities. The Committee recommends that the State party assess the impact of the optimization process on the fulfilment of its obligations under articles 13 and 14 of the Covenant and introduce any necessary revisions into the policy accordingly.**

Cultural rights

74. The Committee is concerned that since the 2012 amendments to the law on identity documents, the national passport system has failed to fully recognize the names of persons belonging to ethno-linguistic minority groups, particularly Russian minorities (art. 15).

75. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to ensure that persons belonging to ethno-linguistic minority groups, particularly Russian minorities, have their names, including patronymics, on their identity cards.**

D. Other recommendations

76. **The Committee encourages the State party to consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.**

77. **The Committee recommends that the State party consider ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.**

78. **The Committee recommends that the State party take fully into account its obligations under the Covenant and ensure the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined therein in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level, with international assistance and cooperation when needed. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would be significantly facilitated by the State party establishing independent mechanisms to monitor progress and treating beneficiaries of public programmes as rights holders who can claim entitlements. Implementing the Goals on the basis of the principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination would ensure that no one is left behind.**

79. **The Committee recommends that the State party take steps to progressively develop and apply appropriate indicators on the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights, in order to facilitate the assessment of progress achieved by the State party in complying with its obligations under the Covenant for various segments of the population. In that context, the Committee refers the State party to, inter alia, the conceptual and methodological framework on human rights indicators developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (see HRI/MC/2008/3).**

80. **The Committee requests that the State party disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of society, including at the national, provincial and municipal levels, in particular among parliamentarians, public officials and judicial authorities, and that it inform the Committee in its next periodic report about the steps taken to implement them. The Committee encourages the State party to engage with the two national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the follow-up to the present concluding observations and in the process of consultation at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.**

81. **In accordance with the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations adopted by the Committee, the State party is requested to provide, within 18 months of the adoption of the present concluding observations, information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 9 (a) (relating to national human rights institutions), 59 (relating to the draft health code) and 73 (relating to the school optimization policy) above.**

82. **The Committee requests the State party to submit its fourth periodic report, to be prepared in accordance with the reporting guidelines adopted by the Committee in 2008 (E/C.12/2008/2), by 31 October 2022. In addition, it invites the State party to update its common core document, in accordance with the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties (see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).**